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AN
ESSAY

To prove,

That the long continuing of one and the same *Parliament*, endangers the *Liberty* of the *People*; and that when a mixt *Government* degenerates into *Tyranny*, it is more lasting, and more destructive of the *Constitution* of a *Country*, than the most *Despotick Government* of a single *Person*.



THE most ancient *Government* of this *Island* was *Monarchy*, not limited but absolute; for our oldest and most *Authentick Records* inform us, That the Power of our First Kings was under no Restrictions; So that the *Reciprocal Contract* betwixt *King* and *People* (so much boasted of by our *Republicans* and others) proves but a meer *Dream* and *Chimera*, as that great *Master of Reason* and
A *Divinity*,

Divinity, the Learned Bishop *Sanderson* has fully evinced, in his *Preface* to Bishop *Usher's* Book, entitled, *The Power of the Prince*.

BUT this *Absolute Monarchy* was, some Hundreds of Years ago, altered into a *mix'd Government*, consisting of the *King* and the *Two Houses of Parliament*, viz. The *Peers* and the *Commons*, the First have Right to Sit by their *Birth*, the Latter by *Election*, and represent the several *Counties*, *Incorporations*, and *Burghs*. The *King* has His *Royal Prerogative*, and the *Parliament* sufficient *Privileges* to enable them to discharge the great *Trust* reposed in them, and to procure an *universal Respect* for their *Persons* and *Character*.

WHEN the *King* endeavours to stretch his *Prerogative* beyond its just *Bounds*, or when *Parliaments* grasp at more *Power* than *Law* allows them, the *State* in either Case must needs suffer *terrible Convulsions*, from which it is not to be recovered but by settling Things upon the ancient *Foundation*.

IF it is a received *Maxim* in the *English Law*, That the *King* can do no *Wrong*, not but that he is *Subject* to *Errors* and *Failings* as other Men, but those *Mistakes* and *wrong Steps* in the *Administration* are not to be imputed to the *Prince*, but the *Ministers* about him, who are liable to condign *Punishment* for their *pernicious Counsels*.

IF this was observed, *Statesmen* would stand in awe to be *Wicked*, and the *Sovereign* would rectifie what was done amiss, when by such *exemplary Justice*, he was fully convinced of the *pernicious Effects* of such *illegal Proceedings*. But we have found to our sad *Experience*, that the *Peoples Jealousy* of their *Sovereign* has been by *self-designing* and *ambitious Men* improven as a *Handle* to overturn both *Church* and *State*, as was the *Fate* of those *Kingdoms* under *Cromwell's Usurpation*; The *Danger* of *Popery* and *Arbitrary Government* was then industriously buz'd in the *Ears* of the *unthinking*

unthinking Croud by the *Sectarian Bouteſeu*, till at laſt the whole Nation was blown up into a Flame, the beſt of Kings was barbarouſly murder'd, the Peers voted out of Doors as unnecessary, and the Other Houſe turned into a *Rump* by that very Army whom they had raiſed, and who were under their conſtant Pay. From which Confuſions and Deſolations good Lord deliver us.

HAD they embrac'd the large Conceſſions offer'd by the Royal Martyr, their groundleſs Fears and Jealouſies had ſoon evaniſhed, and every Thing had been ſet at Rights again, but that would not have answered the Uſurper's Traiterous Deſigns, his Sovereign's Blood behooved to pave the Road to his Greatneſs, and His Royal Off-ſpring continued in Exile, till it pleaſed the Almighty to put an End to our Confuſions, by reſtoring the King and Royal Family, to the univerſal Joy and Satisfaction of His People.

As the Encroachments of Parliaments on the Royal Pre-rogative, when they prove ſucceſſful, naturally End in Anarchy and Confuſion; ſo there is another Extream no leſs dangerous to mixed Governments, and that is, when Parliaments can be prevail'd with to betray their Truſt, and ſacrifice the Peoples Liberties to a Prince and his Miniſters, which, in Effect diſſolves the ancient Conſtitution, and eſta- bliſhes a legal Tyranny, which, of all others is the worſt, and moſt difficult to be ſhaken off.

THE beſt Method to render Parliaments truly beneficial to the Nation, is to call them frequently, and ſend them Home as ſoon as the Buſineſs, which was the Occaſion of their Meeting, is over. The Wiſdom of our Anceſtors did never think it convenient, that one and the ſame Parliament ſhould ſit many Years brooding of Faction: It is in thoſe long continu'd Sefſions, that the Miniſtry grow too familiarly acquainted with the Members, and ſtudy their Complexions: In thoſe Aſſemblies the Skill is learned of guiding, and
being

being guided, where the Youth is deprav'd, and elder Sinners hardned; for Leeches and other Blood-sucking Worms, are engendred in standing Pools; but flowing Waters do not corrupt, or breed so many Insects.

WHEN every Part of the Constitution exerts it self vigorously for the Good of the Whole, there is no need to silence troublesome and ambitious Spirits with some beneficial Office, and when there is no Necessity to hire Men to serve their Country, Princes have a free Choice among their Subjects to call whom they please into the Service of the State; whereas otherwise their Favours are confin'd to a Party, and as their Goodness is thereby more scrimped and less extensive, so the Stations requiring Abilities, and Experience must be better supplied, when a Court is not redacted to that miserable Shift, to find out Places for Men, rather than Men that are fit for the Places.

HISTORY informs us, that in some Countries, Liberty has been in Danger from that Part of the Constitution, which should have been the Guardians of it, which, for the most Part happens, when Princes having precarious or controverted Titles, are obliged to support particular Parties and Favourites, and promote Designs inconsistent with the Wellfare of their Subjects; or when grasping at more Power than was given them by the Laws, they secretly encourage, and connive at the debauching of the People in Elections, to make open Sale of their Voices.

WHERE this detestable Practice prevails, intruding Persons will at any Rate procure themselves to be elected; who at their first Appearance, have the Cunning to set up for the best Patriots, and pretend the greatest Zeal for the Nation's Rights; but this affected Concern lasts no longer, than till they can bring that Credit, and fair Repute they had acquired before to a good Market; for when these Gentlemens Price is offer'd, and agreed upon, they basely desert

desert their Country's Cause, and help on, or at least approve of all that Misgovernment, which had been before the Object of their popular Speeches and venal Eloquence.

WHEN the Triennial Act was in Force, the People had occasion to know the Tempers of those they made Choice of to represent them, and if they chanced to be mistaken in their Choice, they could easily rectifie it at the next Election, which behooved to come on every Three Years: This made their Representatives careful in the Discharge of the great Trust committed to them, and shun every Thing that could give their Constituents the least Ground of Complaint; but in long Parliaments the Disease may go on till it is pass'd Remedy.

THE frequency of Parliaments, (amongst many others) procur'd also this Benefit, that the great Confluence of all Ranks of Persons during the Elections occasion'd the Circulation of Money, which when confin'd to particular Places, brings a dead Palsie on the Body-Politick, as the stagnating of the Blood proves a deadly Symptom to the Natural.

IT was certainly a great Omission not to bring on the *Triennial Act* in the very Beginning of the late Revolution, the Prince of *Orange's* Declaration having promised to redress all our Grievances, which ought to have been the *Pole-Star*, by which our State-Pilots were to steer their Course. It was very well known, that to keep the same Parliament sitting for many Years had been the chief Cause of debauching the *English* Gentry; It was therefore expected, that in the *Act for declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject*, some Provision should have been made against that Evil for the Future; and the Truth is, if a certain Party, which at that Time, and long before, had made so much Noise about Liberty, and Property, had acted conform to their Profession, an effectual Provision might have been then made, that *England* should never again be threatn'd with the same

Danger: Our own Corruptions produced this good Law at last, which verifies the old Saying, *Ex malis moribus bonæ Leges Oriuntur*, and I am afraid we are deprived of it, as a just Punishment of the many scandalous Vices and Immoralities that abound among us.

It has been observed, That when Statesmen had by their Male-administration become obnoxious to the Peoples Resentment, the better to shelter themselves from Punishment, some have very often kept Parliaments quite off, but more have gone on securely in their Crimes, in keeping the Two Houses long together, of whom they had got the Management for many Sessions, which for the most Part proves fatal to the Peoples Liberties, and therefore ought carefully to be guarded against.

'Tis in these long Sessions that the State-Quacks show their Skill to govern the House, their Ability when Occasion requires, to make an important Turn, their Knowledge of the Members, that is, who are to be taken off, and what is their Price, their Diligence in keeping their Mercenary Band together, who, Right or Wrong are to be Unanimous.

By neglecting to put Matters under a good Settlement in the Beginning, one and the same House of Commons continued Sitting, with short Intervals, for Six Years, which renewed the former Errors complain'd of in the Constitution, and restor'd to some Men the same dishonest Interest they had before, and gave them fresh Opportunity to endeavour once more the Subversion and Ruin of their Country, not by the Methods practis'd in former Times, but by the same corrupt Inclinations, and Counsels, dress'd up in other Shapes; and 'tis to be fear'd, That in those Sessions of Six Years Continuance, there was rear'd up a new Brood of Men of Business, as High Flatterers, more False, Designing, and Rapacious

Rapacious than their Predecessors, but with less Skill and Dexterity to support their Malice.

AND because they, by whose Power and Influence Supplies are procur'd, have been thought to give them, the getting the Money Bills dispatch'd, is those Mens chief Care; who by this Means obtain Favours cheaply at the Expence of others; and this single Merit atones for many Faults, excuses several false Steps, and shelters the Bribery of such Ministers, and covers their Disability for the publick Service; for this Reason it is, that an impoverish'd State, a troubled Government, an indebted Exchequer will be the Region most agreeable to such Ministers; Immenſe Sums given every Year will be a proper Field for their Avarice to range in, which would be too much cramped and confined, if bounded within the narrow Limits of what a Nation may be able to pay without being fleec'd.

THE Court may be compar'd to a Shop with Wares in it to fit all Kind of Customers: There is Hope for some, which feed many at a small Expence, there are Titles for the Ambitious, Pleasures for the Young and Wanton, Places for the Busy, and Bribes to be closely convey'd to such as desire to maintain an Appearance of Honesty, and to betray their Trust but now and then in important Matters.

By what has been said, it appears plain and evident; That the frequent Alteration of Parliaments is very beneficial, and the long Continuance of them very prejudicial to the People; and for the most Part attended with Consequences most dangerous to their Liberty: Which leads naturally to the *Second Proposition* undertaken to be proven by this Essay; *That when a mix'd Government degenerates into Tyranny, it is more lasting, and more destructive to the Constitution of a Country, than the most Despotick Government of a single Person.*

IF Parliaments were rightly constitute, and heartily concurred with the Sovereign in every Thing that could be proposed for the Safety and Wellfare of the People whom they represent; such a mix'd Government would be preferable to most of the Settlements in *Europe*.

BUT if a Prince either does not understand the Interest of his People, or has other Aims than their Prosperity and Happiness; if the Nation's Representatives do not preserve their Courage and Integrity, if the Publick Treasure is wasted; if Ministers are allowed to undermine the Constitution with Impunity; if Judges are suffer'd to pervert Justice, and wrest the Laws, then is a mix'd Government the worst Tyranny in the World.

ABSOLUTE Monarchies are often subject to Convulsions, when the Prince happens either to be Weak or Wicked, but then Monarchy has this Advantage, that the Prince is Mortal, and if bad, he may be succeeded by a better; whereas in Common-Wealths, when the chief Sort of the leading Men are debauch'd in Principles, and the People thorowly corrupted, they never return to right Reason; and we see that the Depravity of Manners, which began in *Rome* presently after the second *Punick* War among the Nobility and Gentry, became every Year worse and worse, till at length *Cæsar* became Master of the Common-Wealth; and after his Time, under the succeeding Emperors, every Senate grew more abject and complying than the former, till in Process of Time, the old *Roman* Spirit was utterly extinguish'd, and then that Empire by Degrees became a Prey to Barbarous Nations.

WHEN *Tiberius* assumed the Empire, it was said, *Romæ ruere omnes in Servitium, Consules, Patres, Equites, quanto quis Illustrior, tanto magis falsi ac festinantes.* At *Rome* they all ran into Slavery, the Consuls, the Senate, the Gentry; the Nobler the Person was, the more false, and the greater haste he made.

IT is a Matter of Admiration, that from the Reign of *Augustus*, and downwards, the *Romans*, (who were seldom without brave and publick-spirited Men) did never make an Attempt to restore the Commonwealth, and shake off that Power, which some of the Emperors exercised with such Exorbitance. But in all Probability it proceeded from this, that the Soldiers and Common People (without whom no great Revolution can be effectuate) were not sensible of the Loss of their Liberty; but believ'd themselves still free, because in show, the Commonwealth had the same Form as in elder Times. There was a Senate, Consuls, and Tribunes, and an Appearance of all the ancient Magistracies, tho' nothing remain'd of the ancient Liberty.

BUT this the Inferior Sort of People did not feel, for the Cruelty and Fraud of *Tiberius*, the Madnes of *Caligula*, the Stupidity of *Claudius*, the Riots and Lusts of *Nero*, the Gluttony and sordid Mind of *Vitellius*, the Vanities of *Otho*, and the enormous Vices of *Domitian*, did little Hurt to the lower Rank of Men, who all the while had *Panem & Circenses*, their Bread and the Publick Shows, which was all their Concern. But the Mischiefs those monstrous Princes brought upon the World, fell upon nobler Heads; who yet could not rescue their Country, so much were the Common People lull'd asleep with the Opinion, they entertain'd, that the Laws still govern'd, because they saw every Year Consuls and a Senate; but they were not aware, that this Senate being corrupted, made the Tyranny boundless and safe; for the People could never be induc'd to oppose that Power which still bore some Resemblance to their ancient Form of Government.

THE Tyrannies of a single Person, tho' never so firmly establish'd, have been subverted and pull'd down, where the Princes govern merely by their own Will, without giving the least Appearance of Freedom to their Subjects; but

those despotick Governments are hardly to be shaken, and that Servitude is lasting, where the Representatives of a People are decoy'd to put on their own Fetters. Such a Tyranny is established by a Law, authorized by Consent, and such a People are tyed fast with Chains of their own making.

A Tyranny that governs by the Sword, has few Friends but Men of the Sword, but a legal Tyranny, (where the People are only called to confirm Iniquity with their own Voices) has of its Side the Rich, the Fearful, the Lazy, those that know the Law, and get by it; Ambitious and Pragmatick Churchmen, and all those whose Livelihood depends upon the quiet Posture of Affairs; and the Persons here described compose the influencing Part of most Nations; so that such a Tyranny is capable to do more Mischief in one Year, than the most arbitrary Actings of the most despotick Prince for a whole Reign.

THE Romans may be said to have been enslav'd by Law, under corrupt and degenerate Republicks, from the Time of Cinna, till the Attempts of Caesar, and under degenerate mix'd Governments, while the Emperors made a Show of ruling by Law, but with an awed and corrupt Senate.

OUR Parliaments have no small Resemblance with the Roman Senates, and cannot pretend to Perfection more than they; but in this they differ, That the Senators were all *Patricii*, and the House of Commons consists of the Representatives of Counties and Burghs. By the great Pains many take, and the large Money they bestow to get themselves chosen Parliament-Men, one would be apt to think, that besides the Honour, there was likewise a Post, or at least a Pension to be given to every Member according to the good Service they should perform to their Patrons and Benefactors. But most of them do not consider, that 'tis impossible to gratifie them all, the Leading Men of them are only

only worth the purchasing, the Middle Sort must be content to follow their Guides.

PARLIAMENTS, have of late met oftner upon the account of Supplies, than any other Occasions of State, which in Civility cannot be refused every Year, (tho' there was no more left behind it) when it is given to a Prince, who will not convert it to other Uses than it was design'd for, and who looks upon the Interest of his Subjects as his own: But seeing sometime or other we may come to have a Prince on the Throne, who may be a Stranger to our Constitution, Laws, and Customs, who may have an Interest opposite to that of his Subjects, who may be influenced by Forreign Councils, and may only make Choice of such a Ministry as are entirely disposed to obey their Masters Commands without asking Questions: If such a Sovereign, and so thorow pac'd Ministers of State should chance to meet, Ways and Means will be fallen on to bring the Parliament over to their Side: For supposing (which I hope is very remote) that Parliaments can be brought to be Fools to the Ministry, and to act by their Influence and Direction, and instead of standing up for their Countries Rights and Priviledges, should Study only how to promote their own Interest, and raise their own Fortunes by a Servile Compliance with every Thing the Crown thought fit to demand; If the Supplies should not be rendered more easy to the People in the time of Peace, than in the time of War; If Parliaments, in concert with the Ministry, should be so unfaithful to their Trust, as to consent to the keeping up of a standing Army in time of Peace, and should chouse rather to be govern'd by the Sword than by Law, with a design to make their Master Absolute; would not such a Set of Men, with the Help of a large Revenue, and constant Supplies, quite subvert the Constitution? We have seen, and felt the Milchievous effects of Arbitrary Ministers; and if Men of the same Stamp should come again upon the Stage of Business;

Business, it is very probable they might run into the same wicked Measures, especially if they should chance to be back'd with an armed Force.

If this should ever happen to be the Case of Britain (as GOD Forbid) our well pois'd Political Fabrick must fall to the Ground, nothing will be left but the empty Name of Liberty, which without the Substance turns to a meer Shadow, or rather becomes the worst of Slavery.

If such a Calamity should befall us, we might in vain, and too late perhaps reflect on our own Credulity, Stupidity, and Folly, but from whom could we expect Relief? Those we had entrusted with our most valuable Concerns would be on the Plot against us, if they had been first induced to make a Sacrifice of them to Avarice, and Ambition, and if we should be reduced to this melancholly State, it is to be fear'd that our common People, like those of Rome, would not be sensible of it; they would see the Parliament meet every Year, and without enquiring further, it would be enough to them if it was an Act of Parliament, whose Authority is by them reckoned Sacred.

I shall conclude with two remarkable Sayings of Dr. Davenant, *If there be any amongst us, says he, who desire to Build their Fortune upon the Publick Ruines they ought to consider, that their great Estates, high Honours, and Preferments will avail them little, when the Subversion of Liberty, deprives them of the Protection of the Laws.* Again in another Place.

All that Wealth and Power, which must defend this State upon any Emergencies, or Invasions from Abroad, depends entirely upon our preserving inviolable our Antient Constitution, and never to suffer Fundamentals to be invaded upon any pretext whatsoever.

FINIS.